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Testimony of

**Mary Loftus Levine, Director of Policy and Professional Practice
Connecticut Education Association**

Before the

Education Committee

Re: S.B. No. 1104 "An Act Concerning Charter Schools"

and

H.B. No. 6498 "An Act Concerning School Districts"

March 7, 2011

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. I am Mary Loftus Levine, Director of Policy and Professional Practice for the Connecticut Education Association, representing 40,000 educators in our strong public schools.

The State Department of Education has spent well over four years developing, vetting, and issuing new educator certification regulations. These regulations are currently being re-examined by the department, per the suggestion of the Attorney General's office. Educator stakeholder groups, including CEA, were actively involved in this lengthy and sometimes contentious process.

But the one absolute we all support is having higher qualified and properly certified teachers in our classrooms. These new regulations raise standards, requiring the latest extensive coursework and practice to assure not only that each teacher has content knowledge, but also understands and actually knows how to deliver highly qualified instruction.

As educators, we oppose waiving the requirements that S.B. No. 1106 attempts to accomplish. Charter schools were granted lower standards, waiver language, and new alternate routes to certification which just took effect July, 1. When and where does this end?

On behalf of one of our most vulnerable populations of students which charter schools currently serve, we ask that you stand up for equity and the high standards you demand of our public schools educators for all children, and reject this latest proposal in favor of good public policy.

H.B. No. 6498 also attempts to undo the new charter school language passed in June. We oppose Section 4(c). In this time of fiscal austerity and a possible change in the school funding formula, now is not the time to change the policy that has hardly had a chance to work. Research clearly shows that charters perform on the average no better than public schools; we need to invest in great public schools for all children.

We also oppose Section 5(d) (2) and (3) of section 10-66dd for the same reasons as we oppose allowing uncertified people teach our children. As of July1, charter school teachers had to become members of our Teacher Retirement system. This means they too had to hold a certification to teach. Once again, you are being asked to lower standards and create another waiver by moving the date out two more years. We oppose such a two class system. Everyone should not only be properly certified but pay their fair share. Thank you.